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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3011  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001235

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI PRIME MINISTER SPEAKS OUT ON CORRUPTION

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1161  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 441  
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 1176  
[1](#)D. BAGHDAD 1224

Classified By: ACCO Joseph Stafford, reason 1.4 (b and d)

#### PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

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[1](#)1. (U) Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki used his May 9 meeting with tribal leaders from Northern Iraq to appeal for action against corruption. In remarks widely covered by local and U.S. media, he likened corrupt officials to the criminals responsible for last month's violent robbery of jewelry stores in Baghdad. The Prime Minister stated, "we should launch a campaign against ... corrupt people just as we launched a campaign against outlaws and Al-Qaeda." He urged the public to participate in the effort, saying, "we need cooperation between the people and the government to confront the corrupt people who are misusing public funds." Al-Maliki went on to assert that "corruption represents a major challenge, and we must face it together," while asking citizens to provide authorities with information on corrupt individuals. He pointed to corruption as an obstacle to Iraq's reconstruction program and, to underscore the imperative of tackling it, asserted that "even big powers collapsed when corruption spread."

#### HEIGHTENED PROFILE OF CORRUPTION ISSUE

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[1](#)2. (U) The Prime Minister's May 9 remarks were the latest in a series of high-level GOI pronouncements on corruption. Per ref a, Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih weighed in on the need for strengthened anti-corruption efforts in recent statements. In a well-publicized speech in February (ref b), the Prime Minister stressed the GOI's determination to conduct a "war" against corruption, describing it as "white terrorism." The issue also figures prominently in utterances of late by members of the Council of Representatives (COR). Following the recent arrests of several Trade Ministry (MOT) officials on corruption charges (refs c and d) -- among them a brother of Trade Minister Abd Al-Falah Al-Sudani -- Sheikh Sabah Al-Saedi, chairman of the COR's Integrity Committee, has been especially vocal in calling for stepped-up action by the GOI against corruption.

#### COMMENT

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[1](#)3. (C) The actual extent of the Prime Minister's willingness to match words with deeds and take concrete measures to ensure that corrupt officials are brought to account -- particularly those in the GOI's senior ranks -- is unclear. As previously reported (ref d), the ongoing investigation of corruption at the MOT is likely to provide an important test of Al-Maliki's intentions, as top-level officials -- including possibly Minister Al-Sudani -- are implicated. In a May 11 conversation with the Anti-Corruption Coordinator

and staff (ACCO), the Prime Minister's legal advisor, Fadel Khadem, gave assurances that Al-Maliki would do nothing to shield the detained MOT officials, and the Minister himself (who is affiliated with Al-Maliki's Dawa party), if charged, from prosecution. END COMMENT.

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